(b) if so, what is the number of such contractor's and its men in Indian Railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BASANAGOUDA R. PATIL): (a) About 184 pairs of trains on Indian Railways are running with pantry car services managed by private licensees who engage their staff on their own. The details of men employed by the private licensees are not maintained by the Railways.

(b) Does not arise.

Recommendations of Passengers Amenities Committee

459. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) what are the major recommendations of the last Passenger Amenities Committee;

(b) whether Railways have accepted any of the proposals made by the Committee; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BASANAGOUDA R. PATIL): (a) to (c) The important observations/suggestions made by the Passenger Amenities Committee relate to removal of encroachments from railway land and generation of revenue from surplus land, prevention of entry of unauthorised vendors in moving trains, spending of funds for passenger amenities on facilities like drinking water, seating arrangements, maintenance of waiting halls, toilets, lights, fans etc. and not on major construction works, monitoring the quality of meals etc. The suggestions/observations of the Committee are kept in view while formulating guidelines and implementation.

Light weight coaches

460. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Railways have entered into a contract with the foreign company for the manufacture of light weight coaches for Rajdhani, Shatabdi and some selected superfast trains of the Indian Railways;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the new coaches should be ready for being introduced in the above mentioned trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BASANAGOUDA R. PATIL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Indian Railways had entered into a contract in October 1995 with M/s Linke-Hoffman-Busch (LHB) Germany (now M/s Alstom-LHB) for the Transfer of Technology (ToT) to manufacture light weight, high speed coaches fit for 160 Kmph on Indian Railway system. The ToT was given to Rail Coach Factory (RCF), Kapurthala and RCF has since manufactured and turned out 52 coaches to the new design till date.

(c) The new coaches are ready for introduction in the Mumbai-New Delhi Rajdhani Express service shortly.

Laying of Rail Line from Punthamba to Shirdi

461. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the details of distance covered, in laying of rail line from Punthamba to Shirdi in Maharashtra;

(b) the details of budget sanctioned for this project and the amount of budget released so far, and details of amount spent so far; and

(c) whether under this project by laying rail line from Punthamba to Shirdi, instead of laying rail line from Copergaon to Shirdi, will the devotees could travel from Hyderabad to Shirdi by rail line, without break any where?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BASANAGOUDA R. PATIL): (a) The length of new line from Punthamba to Shirdi is 16.6 Kms.

(b) The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 48.78 crore. An amount of Rs. 8.37 crore has been spent upto 31-03-2003. An outlay of Rs. 10 crore has been provided for this project during the current year.

(c) With the construction of this line, broad gauge rail link will be available upto Shirdi. Punthamba is already connected by broad gauge with Hyderabad.